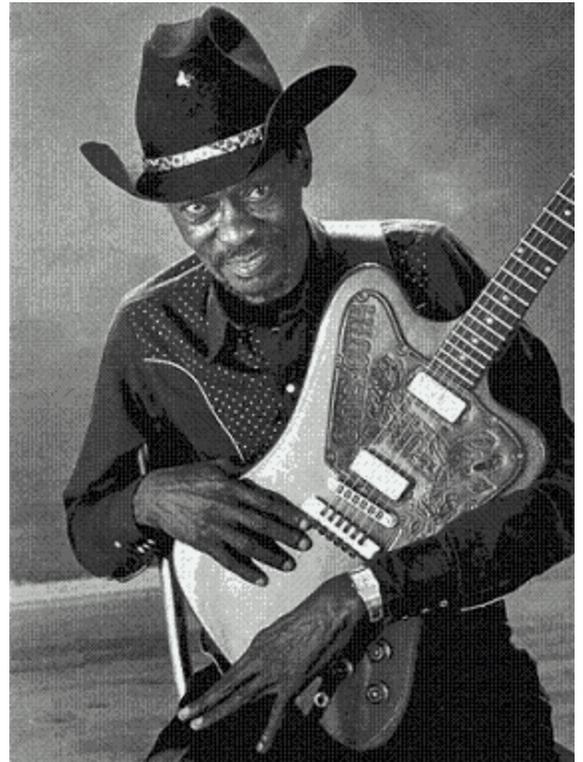


Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown

A multi-faceted musician whose eclectic tastes reflect the great diversity of musical styles found throughout the Southwest; b. Vinton, Louisiana, April 18, 1924; d. Orange, Texas, September 10, 2005. Brown's father, who was one of his strongest musical influences and taught young Clarence to play piano, fiddle, and guitar, was a railroad engineer and a "locally known country, Cajun, and bluegrass musician." Throughout his career, Gatemouth Brown would perform a variety of musical styles on a broad array of instruments, including guitar, fiddle, piano, drums, mandolin, harmonica, and viola.

As a youth in East Texas, Brown absorbed the country, bluegrass, R&B, Czech and German polka, Cajun, and early jazz and swing that could be heard throughout the Texas-Louisiana border region. By the time he was five years old, he had learned to play fiddle, and by age ten, was performing on guitar. By the time he was a teenager, Brown played the drums in territory swing bands, where he was given the nickname 'Gatemouth,' because of his deep voice.



After returning from military service following World War II, Brown first relocated to San Antonio and then eventually to Houston, where he found work at the Bronze Peacock nightclub. During a T-Bone Walker concert there in 1947, Walker became ill and could not finish his show. Brown went on stage, picked up his guitar, and proceeded to play "Gatemouth Boogie," to which the audience responded very enthusiastically. The club owner, Don Robey, also was impressed and arranged for Brown to sign a recording contract with the Los Angeles record label Aladdin.

Brown's first singles for Aladdin were not as successful as he had hoped, so, Robey decided to start his own label, Peacock Records, in order to market Brown's music. Brown's first single with Peacock, "Mary is Fine," hit Number 8 on the R&B charts in 1949. Soon afterwards, Robey picked Brown to be the front man for a twenty-three-piece orchestra that toured throughout the South. During his time with Peacock, Brown recorded a number of hits, including "Okie Dokie Stomp," "Ain't That Dandy," "Boogie Rambler," "Depression Blues," and "Dirty Work at the Crossroads."

By the late 1950s, Brown had become frustrated with the limitations of being strictly a blues and R&B musician and decided to part ways with Robey and Peacock Records. However, throughout the 1960s, Brown had difficulty finding other work as a musician, something he blamed in part on his strained relations with the influential Robey. During this period, Brown held a variety of jobs, including Deputy Sheriff in New Mexico and bandleader on the Dallas television show *The !!!! Beat*. At one point, he moved to Nashville, where he appeared a few times on the popular country music television show, *Hee Haw*. It was also in Nashville that Brown released his first series of country singles.

In the 1970s, Brown was able to restart his career, this time performing the broad range of styles for which he would become famous, including country, jazz, and Cajun, as well as the blues and R&B he had played earlier. Brown also began touring again, not only throughout the United States, but also in Europe and around the world.

During the late 1970s, Brown signed with Real Records, and, by the 1980s, he was enjoying success recording for both Alligator and Rounder Records. In 1982, Brown's *Alright Blues* received a Grammy for Best Traditional Blues Album. He also appeared several times on the PBS television series, *Austin City Limits*. In 1983, Brown's second release through Rounder Records, "One More Mile," along with the re-release of his earlier Peacock recordings brought him even greater acclaim. Brown would win eight WC Handy Awards, be inducted into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame, and receive the Rhythm and Blues Foundation's Pioneer Award.

Brown's independent spirit and eclectic repertoire influenced a variety of other musicians, including Guitar Slim, Albert Collins, JJ Cale, Johnny Guitar Watson, Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Guy, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Brown's wide-ranging tastes also helped broaden the parameters of blues music and redefine the entire blues repertoire.

In September 2004, Brown was diagnosed with lung cancer. Since he was given only a 15% chance to survive after chemotherapy, he decided against treatment. Despite failing health, Brown continued to perform at various festivals, including the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in April 2005. After being displaced by Hurricane Katrina in September 2005, he died at his brother's home in Orange, Texas. Brown was given a military funeral, due to his honorable discharge following World War II, and he was laid to rest at the Hollywood Cemetery in Orange, Texas. Survivors include a brother, four children, Renee, Ursula, Celeste, and Dwyen, and six grandchildren.

Erinn Park